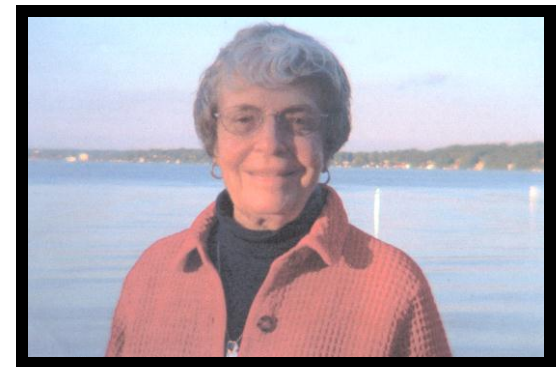


Thirty First Annual

Virginia Hart
Special Recognition Award



May 29, 2014

1:00 p.m.

Senate Parlor
State Capitol
Madison, Wisconsin

About Virginia Hart (1914–2007)

Virginia Hart, Wisconsin's first woman cabinet member, served as Secretary of the Department of Regulation and Licensing, chairperson of the Department of Industry, Labor and Human Relations, and chairperson of the Labor and Industry Review Commission.

Ms. Hart was a superb advocate for workers' rights from the very start of her career. First as a social worker in Rochester, New York, later as a worker for the International Garment Workers Union in Tennessee during the 1940's. When she moved to Wisconsin, she taught at the UW-Madison School for Workers while earning a master's degree in labor economics in 1947.

In the 1960's, Ms. Hart helped set up the Community Welfare Council, which later became the Community Action Commission of Dane County. She served as its president from 1967-1969.

She was appointed to two terms on the Police and Fire Commission where she worked to improve opportunities for women both in the Madison Fire Department and the Madison Police Department.

She helped to form the Group Health Cooperative of South Central Wisconsin, was executive secretary of the Democratic Party of Wisconsin, and more recently was involved in the Dudgeon—Monroe Neighborhood Association in Madison.

Ms. Hart was a world traveler. She and Henry Hart, her husband of 67 years, backpacked in the Rockies, the Andes, and the Himalayas. She also worked as a labor education specialist at the University of Hawaii and for the Agency for International Development in New Delhi, India.

Upon Virginia Hart's retirement from state service in 1983, friends and colleagues established a fund so that each year a woman in Wisconsin state service could be recognized for exemplary performance and contribution to the citizens of the state. On March 24, 2007, Virginia Hart passed away at age 92.

With the generous help of contributors, the fund has been able to sustain the program for 30 years. With continued support, we hope to create an endowment to keep the Virginia Hart special recognition award alive for many years to come.

The recognition award is administered by the Office of State Employment Relations.

About the Award

The Virginia Hart award recognizes “unsung heroines” in state service, thus providing encouragement and recognition to all women in state government. The award seeks to recognize women who share the following qualities: esteem from peers, acceptance of responsibility beyond the limits of their job descriptions, sustained, extraordinary achievement of assigned tasks, performance recognition from clients, community service, self-improvement, and the ability to overcome obstacles to performance.

Awards Program

Welcome

Gregory L. Gracz, Director
Office of State Employment Relations

Remarks

Secretary Kitty Rhoades
Department of Health Services

Presentation of Honorable Mention Awards

Presentation of Virginia Hart Special Recognition Award

Concluding Remarks

Gregory L. Gracz

~Please join us for light refreshments after the program has concluded.~

2014 Virginia Hart Special Recognition Award Recipient

Patricia Banks

Department of Health Services

*Nursing Instructor
Department of Health Services
Central Wisconsin Center*

Patricia Banks has dedicated her nursing career to helping individuals with intellectual disabilities. For the past 23 years, she has been employed at the Central Wisconsin Center as a Nurse Clinician, and is presently a Nursing Instructor in the Certified Instructional Program (CIP) for Nursing Assistants. Pat functions as the lead instructor for the CIP which is a demanding, labor intensive, challenging job.

She is responsible for the daily operation of the program, student education/success and DQA regulatory compliance. Pat possesses an exemplary work ethic, which includes staying until the work is done, taking a heavier workload than other instructors, problem solving individual learning styles, and authoring a class series to teach primary nurse instructors. She is a role model for the rest of the nursing instructors as her expansive knowledge and willingness to help others is evident. She not only provides quality education for the students but she assists them in other ways, such as providing lunch for students that cannot afford food and refers them to EAP for domestic issues.

Pat has the ability to provide students with a structured learning environment accompanied by a caring manner. The evaluations completed by the class reflect that she is well respected by not only her peers but the students she teaches. Pat is always willing to teach larger classes, adjust necessary curriculum and provide additional education for the resident living staff to help transition the students into resident care areas. She seeks self-improvement by researching best practices and attending conferences. She has expressed a desire to teach a community series on grieving. Pat's vast knowledge of developmental disabilities nursing coupled with her teaching expertise truly makes her an asset to not only the staff development department but to Central Wisconsin Center as well.

Honorable Mentions

Sharon L. Bremser

*Consultant Services Supervisor
Department of Transportation
Division of Transportation Systems Development*

Sharon Bremser started her career at the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (DOT), in the engineering field, when most people considered it to be "a man's domain." They had special outerwear and hard hats designed for civil engineers working in construction, and they weren't available in women's sizes or proportions. There were other difficulties working on teams mainly composed of men, but Sharon persevered for over 17 years, eventually advancing in her position. She was trained in quality facilitation and process improvement and she enjoys being part of multi-discipline groups to develop strategies to produce the work more efficiently and cost effective.

Sharon feels strongly that the engineering field needs more women. In the mid-1980s, there were only 20 women engineers at DOT, including Sharon. This represented only about 4% of the agency's 503 staff engineers at the time. Today, DOT employs about 170 women engineers, representing about 23-25% of the total engineering staff. Some of that growth can surely be credited to her support and encouragement of female co-workers.

As an example, when the Affirmative Action Advisory Committee was researching DOT's women pioneers for their 2012 Women's History display, she was invaluable as a resource to the committee. Sharon volunteered her time for an in-depth interview. She was able to describe in great detail what the working environment was like, and offered many additional names and resources for information. She even loaned the committee a number of personal items from that period for a display of the tools DOT's "pioneer women" were working with so current employees could get a sense of how the work has changed, at least in part because of these women. No other single person gave more to the project when she wasn't even part of the committee. She truly is an advocate for women in engineering and gives a lot to the cause.

Sharon is very active in volunteer work for two organizations she feels passionate about and holds close to her heart. She knows the importance of gifts and scholarships to young adults, enabling them to go to college because she grew up in a family just trying to make ends meet.

Sharon is the president of the Women's Transportation Seminar (WTS) Wisconsin Chapter that promotes the education and advancement of women in transportation. WTS works with professionals and others to provide scholarship funds to help students with their continuing education in a transportation field. Sharon has helped to revitalize the chapter, and along with its members works with industry, consultants, and the public to promote WTS.

Her favorite part of this role is to work with 7th -12th graders, coordinating with various universities on educational events that promote transportation related work. Some

examples of these events are the "Sky's the Limit" at UW-Platteville, where WTS volunteers run labs in bridge building to introduce girls to engineering. At the Milwaukee School of Engineering, WTS volunteers help to judge the "Future Cities" project and sponsor the "green" award. This year, Sharon and the WTS, are volunteering for Madison's "Terrace Town" as judges and are working with the school district to prepare for this family-oriented event that appreciates architecture, design, and urban planning. WTS also attracts professionals in activities that range from technical presentations, social and educational events, partnering with others such as DOT to promote its mission.

Sharon and her family are also very dedicated to giving back to our fallen Special Operations soldiers' families through the Special Operations Warrior Foundation (SOWF). Sharon's brother, a Silver Star recipient, is in Air Force Special Operations. Together, Sharon, her brother, and the SOWF have organized the Whomper Stomper Open golf outing that raises funds that are used to pay college expenses for children who have lost a parent in Special Operations. It also provides support and family services to the entire family at the time of death or injury.

Sharon is grateful to have her brother around and this is their way to thank his friends that never made it back. She has organized and directed this program for over ten years, and has raised \$112,000.

Sharon has been nominated because of her can do attitude. She is always helpful to her fellow employees and is the first to ask how she can be of assistance. She creates a work environment that engages people and makes them feel comfortable. Sharon is highly respected by her colleagues for her technical and agency knowledge. She brings energy to all things she does, whether work related or in her personal life.

Kim Eithun-Harshner

*Program and Policy Analyst-Advanced
Department of Children and Families
Division of Safety and Permanence*

Kim Eithun-Harshner is nominated for her exemplary performance and contributions to the people of Wisconsin. Much of this stems from her qualities of humility, extraordinary work ethic and unfailing commitment to give her very best in serving the state's children and families. She is widely known and respected by her peers and coworkers for her collaborative nature, respectful demeanor, expertise, and dedication. State government and Kim's community have benefited greatly from her service.

Throughout her career, Kim has been someone who never says "No", when asked to provide expert information, serve on a committee or workgroup, assist in writing or implementing a grant or initiative, help her community, church, family, friends and others in need. As a result, her calendar is always full, days are often long, and weekends are also used to meet deadlines, complete work, and help others in ways that make a difference for Wisconsin's children and families.

At work, Kim is a recognized expert in mental health, substance abuse, trauma informed care and early childhood development, and is regularly sought out for advice and consultation, not only within the Department of Children and Families (DCF), but by many others. This has resulted in Kim being instrumental in developing effective partnerships between DCF and other agencies and outside interest groups. Kim is also a gubernatorial appointment to the Wisconsin Council on Mental Health (WCMH), a member of their Executive Committee, and co-chair of their Children and Youth Subcommittee. She also recently served as a member of the Ad Hoc Joint SCAODA-WCMH Committee on needs assessment that provided oversight for all aspects of the State Planning Process to ensure submission of the most recent joint state plan for the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

Due to Kim's recognized expertise, leadership and collaborative skills she also participates as a member of the Trauma Informed Care Advisory Committee; Strengthening Families Policy Committee; Milwaukee Community Response Pilot Planning and Oversight Committee; Project Launch Steering Committee; Home Visiting Project Team; the ACE Trauma Workgroup; the Children Come First Steering Committee; and NGA Project on Adolescents. Kim has also played a key role in representing the department in infant mental health and public health collaboration.

Additionally, Kim serves on the Steering Committee for the Wisconsin Alliance for Drug Endangered Children, which largely due to her efforts received recognition by the National DEC Network with an award for the most collaborative efforts. She is the lead DSP staff on the Coordinated Service Team Steering Committee, and as a result of her hard work, Wisconsin CST was one of only a few state projects receiving an increase in funding for demonstrating effectiveness and cost savings to counties.

Kim also regularly demonstrates outstanding leadership skills and has played an active

role in planning for Wisconsin's Children's Mental Health Day; the Drug Endangered Children's Conference, and the Division of Safety and Permanence's Celebration and Event Planning Team. She also had a lead role in the identification, writing and submission of three trauma grant applications in an effort to further the departments' goals to build infrastructure related to trauma by training early care and education and child welfare staff in trauma, and training clinicians in evidence based trauma interventions and parent/child interactive therapy.

Another of Kim's most recent significant achievements that demonstrates her initiative and passion in serving children and families is the development and implementation of the *Wisconsin Trauma Project*. This initiative required significant research in effective evidence based trauma interventions and their successful delivery, as well as excellent collaborative skills and resourcefulness in identifying funding to create and implement this three tiered approach to trauma intervention in the child welfare system. The project introduces an evidence based trauma screening, assessment and intervention into the CPS service array; trains resource and biological parents on childhood trauma; and helps to create a more trauma-informed Child Welfare System. Kim and a co-worker piloted the Wisconsin Trauma Project year-long learning collaborative in Barron, Burnett and the St. Croix Tribe in 2012 and the project is now well underway in other areas of the state with a trajectory for statewide implementation.

Not only has Kim made a significant impact from her work for state government, but also in her community. She is widely known for her extraordinary service. She actively participates by working in food pantries and by delivering, and organizing food drives. She is active in the homeless shelters, where she brings food, prepares meals and stays as an overnight host, whenever needed. If Kim learns of someone that does not have appropriate shoes or clothes, she responds to meet the need.

Kim has also over many years opened her home to family, friends and university students that needed help and Shelter for a variety of reasons. Kim and her husband have regularly opened their home to foreign university students that need a host family during vacations, resulting in long-term friendships. She has taken in many homeless women over the years that needed shelter due to strenuous circumstances.

While Kim worked in Grant County she had opened her home to people while they were receiving cancer treatment in Madison. She has also paid for medicine and health insurance for family members that were in need and desperately needed this type of support.

Kim is very humble and discreet in all she does. She never looks for acknowledgement for all her wonderful work. If you ask her what she is most proud of, it is not the list of the many accomplishments described above but rather, that every time she speaks or interacts with someone, she always respects and dignifies them. It is an innate character trait. When Kim worked in child protective services, she strived to build up the parents pride and feelings about themselves to have them know that they were valued. This is who Kim is, a true "unsung heroine".

Julie A. Graziano

Program and Policy Analyst

Department of Natural Resources

Division of Forestry

Julie Graziano has been an asset to the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and the people of Wisconsin for nearly 30 years. Her impact escalated as she became part of the Division of Forestry leadership 10 years ago and has increased in scale over the last two years as she has initiated and led the transformation of several important management systems within the DNR. This work is positioning the agency to improve the quality of our managers, the effectiveness of our employees, overall job satisfaction, and our capacity to attract and retain top notch talent.

Julie is highly respected by her co-workers. She has influenced change and quality improvement within DNR, not through positional power, but through hard work, creativity, vision, a commitment to improvement, and effective problem solving.

Transforming human resources systems and improving the capacity of managers; the vast majority of whom were imprinted on the long standing and ineffective model, is a daunting challenge. Having faced resistance from those vested in the status quo or who are change averse, made it doubly so. To persist over many years and to seize upon those opportunities that presented itself such as a division seeking improvement is both difficult and prescient. For, as a result, Julie's leadership and ideas were seized upon by the new administration as they sought ways to improve the capacity of the department to accomplish the mission.

Going back to the 1990s, Julie's work with regard to hiring was recognized as an important improvement to the standards in place at the time and was seized upon by the leadership within Forestry. Her work was so highly thought of that the Forestry Division reallocated a position in 2004 to bring her into a leadership role. As others were exposed to her immense talent, her leadership and consultation was requested elsewhere in the department.

Julie pioneered the use of competency based position descriptions and hiring practices that transformed hiring at DNR from focusing mostly on the technical aspects of a job to a much more holistic and effective approach that recognizes the importance of interpersonal and managerial competencies in addition to technical expertise in successful job performance.

She obtained her official coaching certification while coaching DNR supervisors and employees in her roles as DNR's Employee Assistance Program Director and Affirmative Action/Equal Employment Opportunity Officer. She has gone on to coach not only individuals but also executive teams.

She has led a revolution in the department's support of its supervisors' successes in effectively managing people. Key performance management systems have been created or improved under Julie's leadership. She also improved a newly automated performance review system to create clearer expectations of employees and supervisors.

She developed and collaboratively presented briefings and trainings on tools that help supervisors calibrate their performance reviews among their employees and between units in the organization. For the first time as a Department, reviews can be compared across division and bureau lines. These systems greatly improve the consistency of standards and implementation of the review process for the agency.

Julie collaboratively created and presents performance management training for all DNR supervisors in how to use tools and techniques to approach each employee in a customized way to address opportunities for growth and improvement. These sessions are extremely popular: many experienced supervisors have asked for an opportunity to attend Boot Camp.

Her leadership efforts on performance management within DNR resulted in her presenting the system to the Governor's Cabinet meeting in August 2013. Other agencies have reached out to Julie as a result of that presentation as they too assess how to improve performance management.

Julie successfully promoted to leadership the value of conducting research on how well the workforce is engaged with the mission of the department. Julie led the Department's Leadership Team in designing all supervisors meetings to foster a consistent understanding among managers of the department's mission, vision, values and leadership intent, as well as to gather input from attendees toward more successful engagement. These were followed by listening sessions for all employees. They have been very well received, and are successfully laying the groundwork for a more cohesive, efficient, and effective DNR.

Julie could easily have operated within the constraints of the positions she has held but has not settled for the easy path. She has developed skills and expertise in new areas and has both seen and pursued possibilities for positive change. She became a leader in Forestry because she seized on the opportunity to help transform the way the division approached hiring and mentoring. That expanded to include serving on the Division's Leadership Team, a role she fulfills not because of her position, but rather, due to the value she brings to the table.

Julie's career has been characterized by overcoming hardships, leadership callings in the form of confronting an organizational culture resistant to change and deeply embedded institutional conventions in hiring practices, performance management, and supervisory accountability. However, with engagement and support from leadership at the division and department levels, she has been able to move mountains.

Julie also gives back to her local community and profession, contributing her time and leadership serving on the City of Madison Personnel Board, and as a Member of the Madison Organizational Development Squad (MOD Squad).

She is a strong role model for all leaders in her constant and continuous commitment to self-improvement. She has invested in building her knowledge base and her skill sets over decades, often on her own time and at her own expense. One of her greatest strengths is in investigating "what is out there?", and taking action to equip her-self to use that knowledge and resources for the benefit of the organization. Julie's professional credentials include that she is a certified professional coach (CPC).

She is a member of the Society for Human Resources Management and has achieved the senior professional of human resources certification (SPHR). She received a leadership fellowship (2010-2011) and served as the DNR's delegate at the National Conservation Leadership Institute. She received her Bachelor's in Sociology and Master's in Social Work degrees from the UW Madison. She was a featured presenter at the State Society for Human Resources Management Annual conference on Leadership Development in October 2013 and was recently published as a co-author on Performance Management innovations at the WI DNR on Halogens , an HR website.

Julie is an entrepreneur and change agent operating within a large and cumbersome bureaucracy. In spite of long odds and lots of resistance, Julie has thrived as she has added immense value at the division and now department level. Because her career exemplifies the determination and leadership that earned Virginia Hart such legendary respect, Julie is particularly deserving of the Virginia Hart Award.

Mary Knox

Teacher

Department of Health Services

Wisconsin Resource Center

Mary Knox has been a Special Education teacher at the Wisconsin Resource Center for the past 12 years. She has had an immeasurable impact on the lives of the clients she serves through her personal, influential style of teaching as well as the projects and programs that she has directly been a part of.

Mary ran her own day care out of her home for many years before becoming a teacher for the State of Wisconsin. Her passion for children prompted her to create the Fathers' Support Group as well as a Parenting group for the Pre Release/Reentry Program. In addition to teaching healthy parenting practices, she also facilitates the Illness Management and Recovery program (IMR) as well as the HSED 5.09 Program. Males that have been unsuccessful in their attempts to earn their high school equivalency diplomas during their lifetime have had success and earned their HSED diplomas in Mary's class with her dedication, enthusiasm, and patience to their success. She has also been active in the Restorative Justice Program, Stories of Change, the Ripple Effect group, and continues to volunteer annually for fund raising efforts for other staff and patient projects like the annual Spring softball game and talent show, intended to raise money for children's sports teams, The Christine Anne Center and other worthy and life changing, community groups.

Mary has been an unsung heroine her entire life. She is a woman that has always extended her help and assistance to whoever needs it. She has been a lifetime volunteer in her community with churches, leading Christmas gift drives for families in need, as well as working at shelters to serve hot meals to those that are displaced. In the past she has worked, with the crocheting group to donate baby clothes to community mental health organizations and countless other selfless acts for the betterment of others.

A couple of Mary's fundamental beliefs that she shares with her students and colleagues is that each of us needs to, "pay it forward"; for all of us to do our part to enhance our own humanity. She has been an inspiration to many staff and patients within our WRC community and within her hometown. She continues to volunteer herself and her time for the betterment of others and never asks for recognition or a thank you. Mary Knox is the embodiment of an unsung heroine that is so deserving of recognition for her loving efforts and influence. Mary lives her life in an extraordinary way each day; she lives each day in service to others' betterment.

Valorie Nelson

Youth Counselor

Department of Corrections

Lincoln Hills School

Valorie Nelson has worked at Lincoln Hills School for over 20 years. She has held numerous positions in different cottages with as many as 48 young men/inmates. These young men show substantial respect for her as do her peers. She runs her shifts with a firm hand and a rough humor all her own.

Valorie has trained, mentored, and advised new employees as well as negotiating with management and has been an integral part of the institution.

She coordinates the yearly "Chili Dump" to raise money for kinship, an organization that helps children of single parents. Each year she organizes a collection for our soldiers overseas. Among the items are essentials such as handi-wipes, toothpaste, gum and other such items collected at work and sent to our soldiers over the Christmas holidays. She has organized the "walk for life", "North woods Idol" singing contest, and an annual raffle in the Tomahawk area to raise awareness and money for Breast Cancer research.

Valorie works full time and with her husband, is raising two daughters. She has done all these things while herself fighting cancer! She is believed to be in remission at the present time but has had relapses over the years. She shows courage every day in all she does.

Lori Patrouille

*Deputy Warden-Program Assistant-Confidential
Department of Corrections
Stanley Correctional Institution*

Lori's career with the State of Wisconsin began in 2001 as a Segregation Program Assistant at Waupun Correctional institution. In this role she served a challenging population of offenders in segregation by arranging for their needs, such as law library time, phone calls, document reviews and more. She created organized and maintained files on the segregation inmates and managed correspondence through the department. When the opportunity came for her to relocate her family, she made the decision to transfer into the Stanley area for additional job opportunities.

Lori has been employed at Stanley Correctional Institution since 2003. Lori really has been the epitome of "Super-Woman" at Stanley. She first arrived to serve the school as the Education Program Assistant. In that role, she effortlessly tackled the data entry and filing required to maintain positive school enrollment for hundreds of inmate students. She worked in a positive manner throughout staff interactions. Lori was lauded by her supervisor for being an essential part of the education team, having good organizational skills and making sound decisions in the school office. When she was presented with the opportunity to take on a new role, she moved into the position of Security Program Assistant-Confidential. Within this position at the institution, she worked closely with the Security Director and staff managing a wide variety of responsibilities and ensuring smooth, efficient operations. She also demonstrated considerable knowledge of security policies and practices within the Division of Adult Institutions as well as institution security protocols.

Her next career opportunity moved her into the Warden's office. If asked, Lori will tell you that the position of Warden's Secretary was one of her most challenging, yet rewarding career moves. Within her 4 1/4 years in the role, Lori worked with 4 different Wardens, taking each transition in stride while maintaining smooth operations in the Warden's Office and among the administrative team. She stepped up to the plate and expanded her knowledge in the operational details of all areas at the Institution.

Lori currently serves as the Deputy Warden Program Assistant-Confidential and truly enjoys this position, in part, because she has great command and interaction among several different departments at the Institution. She effortlessly handles confidential personnel issues and regularly ensures the preparation and management of various reports in a timely manner

During various times over the years when the institution was placed into lockdown, Lori served as Recorder in the Command Post for every incident and emergency situation. She has done so effortlessly, remaining calm and acting as a source of guidance for others new to such situations.

Lori has received recognition as Employee of the Quarter at the Institution. Ask her supervisor and he will tell you: "Lori is a tireless professional who works with minimal supervision and, in addition to her excellent work ethic and cheery demeanor, outstanding

interpersonal communication skills; she is very skilled in overall office organization and administration". Lori is a computer account administrator and when it comes to computers, she is the first person people head to when they have a question. She has trained countless staff in the use and operation of computers and ensures new staff, become familiar with the policies and procedures governing computer use.

Lori's leadership has been evident over the course of her career, having served most recently as the Chair of the 10-Year Anniversary Committee, overseeing a large public relations event with over 200 guests. Having served as the institution coordinator for the community, she promotes participation in community volunteer events, "Make a Difference Day," where teams of volunteers assist the elderly within the Stanley community with their yard work in preparation for winter.

Since she started with the institution, Lori has also served on the Employee Services Program. Additionally, she coordinates an annual staff School Supply Drive, collecting supplies to donate to the local school. She has also organized pop tab drives at the institution to help raise money for the Ronald McDonald house. For a number of years, Lori has served in leadership roles within the community as an American Cancer Society Relay for Life Event Organizer, an event that also lead her to become a Team Captain for the institution. As a result of her efforts, she was honored by the American Cancer Society in 2006 and received the Volunteer of the Year Award.

Lori's work ethic really shines through in all that she does. She often lends a helping hand to those around her, anticipates the needs of others, has routinely trained others and has picked up additional job duties all without complaint. She often takes on a wide variety of projects and genuinely enjoys going the extra mile to help others. Lori's supervisors and coworkers have absolute respect for her and their admiration shows through in their feedback about her.

Lori reaches out to each and every employee at the institution by means of a weekly newsletter. She always has positive, inspiring quotations in her newsletters. Lori has been a strong advocate for establishing workplace events that help instill a positive, cooperative attitude among others. She initiated the Random Acts of Kindness week, which was all about fostering kindness, and recognizing the kindness that occurs each day between co-workers.

Lori has chosen to take on additional employment within the community. She gets up early at least one day each week to work as a home health aide. Her position allows her to care for a young gentleman within the community who is stricken with cerebral palsy. She travels to his home, assists him with daily living skills, and then drives him to his worksite in the community. In the evenings, she works part-time in a retail department store.

Through her hard work and dedication, Lori Patrouille has impacted the lives of countless others across the state of Wisconsin. Lori embodies the spirit of Virginia Hart in every way.

Claudia Peterson

*Technical Services Section Chief
Department of Transportation
Division of Transportation SE Region*

Much has changed over Claudia Peterson's 30 years of service with DOT. After graduating from UW Platteville with a degree in Traffic Safety Education, Claudia traded the big city lifestyle to raise a family and work part time on her husband's family dairy farm. Interested in putting her degree to work, she pursued a full time job at the Division of Motor Vehicles in Fond du Lac. She began by providing customer service at the counter and eventually moved back to Milwaukee, serving at the downtown DMV. She enjoyed the challenges of working and was dedicated to her job and family. When her children started school, she decided to focus more on making a career at DOT, where she was later promoted to supervisor.

After almost 20 years at DOT she decided to take her management skills to the next level wherein, she was promoted to the Business Services Manager at the Southeast Region in Waukesha and then as Technical Services Chief. The latter position included real estate but also about 10 other Technical Areas. Real estate and utilities management are on the critical path before construction can begin; wherein some of the most complex and challenging transportation improvement projects exist in Claudia's Region.

Claudia is responsible for the areas of real estate; utilities; and the administrative, environmental, and engineering services. These services are critical to ensure the successful delivery of the Southeast Region's highway improvement program. She now manages over 15 different functional areas with a staff of nearly 90. Throughout these various responsibilities, Claudia illustrates a proven track record of going above and beyond normal duties as well as self-improvement.

Her current job is a multitude of highly technical areas of responsibility in many different functions. Over time, not only has Claudia become the Chief / Manager of these areas, but has developed superior knowledge, skills, and abilities to be effective in the technical areas. She is a quick learner and committed to understanding all areas in Technical Services. Today her work in the region is superior. She can be counted on for her expertise and is sought out for her knowledge and leadership skills.

Her team of supervisors appreciates her approach and professionalism. She has made the effort to learn as much as she can in each area and advocates for her staff. She has earned the respect of her peers around the state. She has the unique ability to get to the core of the problem and meet project deadlines with a proposed solution.

She is a natural leader who listens to all sides, advocates for staff, manages complex issues and presents a positive attitude. In a division prominently consisting of engineers, Claudia is able to bridge the gap between engineering staff and her team through solid communication and really hard work. She is not afraid to ask difficult questions, roll up her sleeves and get work accomplished.

With the breadth and depth of Claudia's day to day responsibilities, she still finds time to go above and beyond her duties. She oversees training and development for existing staff in the region. She is piloting a new program (with the potential to save time and money) with the Department of Natural Resources, WE Energies and contractors to consolidate erosion control utility permitting.

She leads the Diversity Committee, serving as Voluntary Chair on the Milwaukee County State Employees Combined Campaign. She provides support to the department E-Learning Committee and Strategic Planning Team. Taking on additional statewide committees and serving as the keynote speaker at the Condemnation Appraisal Symposium.

Claudia's work and leadership is critical to deliver the region's project workload. In addition to standard projects, she took on two mega projects; the \$1.9 billion 1-94 North-South corridor, and the \$1.7 billion Zoo Interchange; two projects where success hinge on real estate and utility coordination before construction can begin.

Work is underway to reconstruct the Zoo Interchange, the largest and busiest interchange in the state. Claudia led negotiations with Milwaukee County, WE Energies and the American Transmission Company, which were some of the most complex agreements the region has undertaken. The end result is a mutually beneficial partnership and a utility agreement of \$75 million to best serve the taxpayers. In addition, Claudia is leading the \$130 million real estate acquisition and \$135 million utility budget on just the Zoo Interchange project alone.

She was successful in acquiring over 800 parcels as part of the 1-94 North-South corridor project. Claudia worked under extremely aggressive timeframes to deliver these parcels. Many projects were advanced as a part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act to invest in infrastructure and job creation. She handled this additional workload with the utmost professionalism and met all deadlines on time and on budget. Because of her team's documented success, tracking reports were developed that are now utilized on mega projects statewide.

Claudia creates a positive workplace community through mentoring and sharing her technical expertise. In her personal life, Claudia received recognition for hitting the three gallon mark in blood donations. She is a volunteer guest lecturer at a UW Platteville leadership class and chaired the Toys for Tots Campaign in West Bend, along with charging the food committee for West Bend High School Project Graduation.

For over 10 years, she volunteered as the lead team parent for her children's high school sports teams' covering several different sports. She believes and seeks the potential in others and gives them confidence, coaching and mentoring when needed. Claudia creates a climate of growth and opportunity. She has a keen ability to lead a group of individuals from varying backgrounds.

Claudia's philosophy: Be passionate about everything you do. Keep a balance between family, friends, and career. Continually learn new things and listen to others. Take on new areas of responsibility. Enjoy being a part of what's happening and display positive energy. Start each day with an appreciation of the day and look forward to what it holds.

She embraces the changing path in front of her with dignity, strength and passion. Claudia Peterson is an unsung hero of state government. She embodies the qualities deserving of the Virginia Hart Award. She is held in high esteem by peers, and accepts responsibility well beyond her job duties.

Kristine Pool

*Secretary-Confidential
Department of Corrections
Division of Adult Institutions*

Kris has been the Warden's Secretary at Kettle Moraine Correctional Institution (KMCI) since November 2010. New to state service and the correctional system, Kris's exceptional office and computer skills and cheery, helpful attitude quickly made her a key employee at KMCI. She is always upbeat, thorough, efficient, and positive, with no task too big or too small. No matter how much she has going on, she will always take the time to assist a co-worker.

Kris steps up and volunteers for new projects that are outside the normal realm of her job description, especially when she sees a need. One example is Outlook training. She saw that quite a few uniformed staff were having difficulty using email, and with a concerted effort to move to electronic communications, she asked the training supervisor if she could develop a basic "how to use" Outlook training session. It was approved and those that attended provided very good feedback. Another example is the new volunteer orientation policy that has recently been updated within DOC. Volunteers who only go to an institution a few times a year need to have a brief orientation session. Kris came up with the suggestion of making a PowerPoint presentation and recording all the narrative; She then designed the presentation and took it home with her and spent several hours of her personal time recording to her satisfaction the narration due to unavailability of the necessary equipment at work.

With the landslide of changes over the past few years in DOC and at KMCI, Kris's help is a constant asset. She knows how to prioritize her workload and always adjusts her schedule to accommodate the latest request for assistance. She is a team player, always ready and willing to help in any way. She is actively involved in many institution committees, including the Correctional Employees Week, Employee Management Communication & Collaboration, Activities, and Job & Resource Fair committees. She has brought a new level of professionalism to every aspect of the events planned by each of these committees, especially with printed materials.

Specifically, she has streamlined the registration process for the Job & Resource Fair for vendors. She has brought in contacts to assist with the mock interview workshops that assist the offenders in preparing to attend the Job & Resource Fair. Kris works with the offenders one-on-one during the resume workshop, to help build a stronger resume. The first time this workshop was offered, Kris had a line of offenders waiting to work with her specifically because they saw the additional help she was able to offer. She is also assisting in preparation, development and design of a PowerPoint presentation on Human Trafficking that will be used to train the staff.

Kris is actively involved with International Association of Administrative Professionals (IAAP) and Toastmasters International. As the Division Secretary of the Wisconsin Division IAAP, District Secretary of Toastmasters District 35, and Club President of Cream City Communicators, she uses these platforms as an opportunity to help educate others about the reentry efforts that the DOC is undertaking.

She is on the advisory board for the office and business technology programs at Moraine Park and Lakeshore Technical Colleges. She is always encouraging graduating students to apply for one of the many available opportunities within state service.

For the past three years, Kris has been an active volunteer on the planning committee for the Career Tools conference. Sponsored by the Archdiocese of Milwaukee, this all day educational event provides the most current job search strategies, tools, and hands-on practice designed to empower unemployed job seekers. In addition to being an educational session presenter, Kris utilized her networking skills with the planning committee to bring additional resources to the KMCI Job & Resource Fair and reentry initiatives for outside facilitators. Her dedication to her position is proven year after year as she uses personal vacation time from work to assist with the Career Tools Conference. She has shared information about this event annually with the Reentry Director to encourage reentry staff to attend and sharpen their skills in assisting inmates with new strategies.

Over the past 10 years, Kris has willingly and freely shared her knowledge and computer expertise by leading educational workshops for dozens of administrative professionals seeking to improve their Microsoft skills or conducting workshops to improve use of social media resources. Kris is always seeking opportunities for professional development. A few of her vacation days last year were spent attending education conferences and events. She applies this new knowledge at work when possible or as a starting point for additional research. She has shared information at several of the leadership presentations with the executive staff, often offering ideas or designing the PowerPoint needed for the presentation.

With her involvement in Toastmasters, Kris is continually improving her communication and leadership skills. Working through their education program on the communication side, she has attained two Competent Communicators awards and the Advanced Communicator Bronze award. On the leadership side, she has received two Competent Leader Awards and the Advanced Leader Bronze (holding a club officer position and giving two leadership presentations).

Additionally, Kris personally funded the Training Rewards program, which grants her access to all live seminars and webinars. She has taken a lot of their training and shares the information and shortcuts learned with others. Kris doesn't give herself enough credit for all that she can do, perhaps because for her, it comes so naturally. She doesn't realize the difficulty that so many others would have completing the majority of the tasks she does. Kris truly is an "unsung hero" and is deserving of the Virginia Hart award.

Deb Roemer

*Director, Disabilities Programs Bureau
Department of Employee Trust Funds
Division of Insurance Services*

Deb Roemer was recently honored for 30 years of public service with the State of Wisconsin. She started her career with the State at UW Stout in 1982 as a shipping and mailing clerk. She transferred to different UW campuses to advance her career, eventually coming to the Department of Employee Trust Funds (ETF) in 1990 as a Trust Funds Assistant. She transferred to DATCP in 1992, but returned to ETF in 1998, and has remained since.

Deb has risen through the ranks at ETF, from Trust Funds Specialist to Bureau Director. Given her duration at ETF, her experience and her thorough knowledge of complex program areas, she has a phenomenal level of respect and credibility throughout the department. Combined with her positive and helpful nature, she is viewed as a thought leader and a go to person.

As exemplified by her career path, Deb has sought out leadership opportunities, while also raising a family and volunteering in community activities. She has exceptional skills and the ability to help people realize they should not take things personally, no matter how controversial the topic. She helps them realize that although there may be differing opinions, everyone has something to contribute and leads the discussion towards focusing on the common goal(s). Deb has the ability to listen, understand what people are saying, and succinctly capture it. She easily builds rapport and trust with people and has demonstrated this in her communications within all levels of the organization and external stakeholders. This is also demonstrated in her work with individuals who are applying for disability benefits or have recently become disabled and may be in a crisis situation in their personal lives.

She has a planned and thoughtful approach and is extremely well organized in not only her work but also in directing the work of those she supervises. Deb is respected not only by her peers and superiors, but also by those she supervises. She has a common sense approach when dealing with issues and is always open to the suggestions and viewpoints of others. She not only has great knowledge of the job, but is also extremely easy to work with and very supportive of her staff. She is the type of person; people just want to be around; very positive and genuine, and truly cares about others.

Deb's hard work and accomplishments have been recognized multiple times within the agency, as she has made her way up the ladder from specialist to lead worker to supervisor, and ultimately, to bureau director. No matter what position she has held, she has always gone above and beyond to help clients and co-workers. It is because of her knowledge, work ethic, customer service expectations, and personable interactions that she has been able to create the great team working for her.

Working with disability applicants has some very challenging moments on a daily basis. Deb has always been available to share concerns and give advice on individual cases. She is always working to improve communication and, work processes within ETF and

throughout outside agencies. Deb has always made the customer the priority. Because she has shown her employees what it takes to get a job done with pride, they are able to portray the same values in their daily work. She has proven that it's possible to work together, to be a team, and to be a very productive, caring Bureau.

Deb Roemer is a sparkling gem and the world needs more like her. The energy she brings to every task she surmounts is amazing. She not only brings history and knowledge to each interaction, she brings a smile, kindness and the ability to share her in-depth understanding with others. Deb goes that extra mile. She takes what needs to be done a step further to confirm that all gain an understanding of why! In doing so, she gives confidence that when she is involved, significant and essential things are accomplished.

Not only in her own division, but the entire department holds Deb in the highest of esteem. She is very well respected and trustworthy in her vast knowledge about all benefits administered by ETF, not just disability benefits, as well as her excellent personality. Everyone follows suit in her modeling of behaviors she would like to be represented in her bureau. She continually goes above and beyond the call of duty by accepting various high profile roles within the department.

She is a great collaborator. While advocating for the bureau and clients' interests, she is always willing to listen to other opinions and input. She openly shares her knowledge, rather than hoarding it.

Deb has been involved in a number of high level and enterprise wide initiatives at ETF. These initiatives range among re-engineering and process improvement workgroups, program redesign; to being a key member of workgroups relating to the Department's Benefits Administration System overhaul.

Deb also co-chairs the Board of Managers. Many of these activities have significant impacts on our members and staff. All have a focus on improved customer service and improved workflow for staff. All benefit from Deb's in-depth knowledge and creative solution oriented mindset.

The most encompassing and long term activity to note is that every year Deb organizes the Elderly Christmas Food Baskets through the Church. She has organized this event for the past 10 years, which entails recruiting volunteers to help assemble and hand deliver baskets full of baked goods, fruit, and other goodies to 60-70 elderly individuals in her community. Deb is also a current member of the Catholic Council of Women and was involved with the Jaycee's for a number of years as well.

Mary Elizabeth Scott

*Operations Program Associate
Department of Workforce Development
Division of Administrative Services*

Mary has been a state employee for nearly 30 years, eighteen of those with the Department of Workforce Development (DWD). During her time in state service, she has excelled drastically from mailroom clerk to her current role as Operations Program Associate, the primary function of which is asset management. She is responsible for maintaining inventory pool of IT equipment for the whole department, keeping inventory and asset records current, and clearing hard drives of secure information so equipment can be taken to surplus. Due to recent staffing cutbacks in her department, Mary has taken on additional tasks related to management of its database, building security and access cards, key inventory, and the photo identification process. She worked closely with the programming staff to create a Share Point site that allows precise record keeping of building access and keys. Due to these duty changes along with implementation of the enterprise-wide STAR Project, Mary has willingly taken on learning new software as a learning opportunity for self-improvement.

The largest and most widespread division of the department is the Unemployment Insurance Division. Mary's co-workers in this area asked that she be nominated based on her exceptional customer service, attention to detail and accuracy, prompt service, and finally, her cheerful disposition and willing spirit. They further pointed out her ability to find more efficient methods of performing routine tasks and willingness to provide services outside her assigned job duties.

Mary is a good steward of the public funds, always looking for ways to save the department money. In her humility, she has been noted to say that she will do her work so others can do the more important tasks that help the citizens of Wisconsin. She can be relied on to perform the tasks that allow DWD to run smoothly.

In addition to her performance as a model employee, Mary, most heroically, donated her kidney in 2010 as part of the National Kidney Registry and initiated a live donor chain that resulted in six transplants of live kidneys. As Mary was well aware, she qualified under the Wisconsin Act 125, which would have granted her up to 30 days of leave of absence without interruption of benefits, seniority or pay, she still returned to work within far less than 30. Upon her return she stated she didn't want this to create any undue burden to her co-workers having to cover her duties. Mary also received the Jefferson Award because of her donation of a human organ.

Since 2002, Mary has been a dedicated and trained American Red Cross volunteer and has driven, and served with the Emergency Response Vehicles to several national disasters. During these services she has brought food and supplies to those affected by disasters such as Hurricane Katrina, the floods in Wisconsin and Minnesota, along with countless local fires and incidents.

Mary Scott is the ideal candidate for the Virginia Hart Award. As an employee of 30 years with the State of Wisconsin, she has earned the respect and admiration of her peers.

She is a good steward of public funds and a reliable employee. She is eager to learn new tasks on her road to self-improvement, and is an unsung heroine in her initiation of a live donor chain starting with the donation of her own kidney.


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Virginia Hart

We have joined with other Wisconsin leaders to create an endowment to keep the Virginia Hart Special Recognition Award alive. We hope you will join us.

Virginia Hart was Wisconsin's first woman cabinet member. She also served as Secretary of the Department of Regulation and Licensing, Chairperson of the Department of Industry, Labor and Human Relations, and Chairperson of the Labor and Industry Review Commission. On March 24, 2007, Virginia Hart passed away at the age of 92.

Upon her retirement from state service in 1983, friends and colleagues established a fund so that each year a woman in Wisconsin state service could be recognized for exemplary performance and contribution to the citizens of the state. The Virginia Hart Special Recognition Award emphasis is on recognizing "unsung heroines" in state service, thus providing encouragement and recognition to all women in state government. The award seeks to recognize women who share the following qualities: esteem from peers; acceptance of responsibility beyond the limits of the nominee's job description; sustained, extraordinary achievement of assigned tasks; performance recognition from clients; community service; self-improvement; and overcoming obstacles to performance. The recipient is recognized at an award ceremony with a plaque and cash award. With the generous help of contributors, the fund has been able to sustain the program for 30 years. Help us establish an endowment so the award will live on for years to come.

We are asking you to make a tax-deductible donation. By joining the Friends of Virginia Hart, you will help ensure her legacy continues and that women in Wisconsin State service are recognized for their contributions.

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Please make checks payable to: Wisconsin Women's Network

Return this card with your check to: Friends of Virginia Hart c/o OSER 101 E. Wilson St. 4th Floor, PO Box 7855, Madison, WI 53707-7855. The fiscal agent for the Friends of Virginia Hart is a 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation. Contributions are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law.

For more information, please contact Jennifer Gebert, Office of State Employment Relations, at (608) 267-2155 or email Jennifer.Gebert@Wisconsin.gov.



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